



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 18, 2005

News Release

FINAL HONDURAN SMUGGLER SENTENCED FOR HOSTAGE TAKING

Six Hondurans were convicted for taking 15 aliens hostage at gunpoint last year

HOUSTON—Following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the last of six convicted Honduran alien smugglers was sentenced today to 330 months in prison while for taking a group of 15 illegal aliens hostage at gunpoint in March 2004.

Elbin Geovanny-Mezen, 23, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Nancy F. Atlas to 27½ years in prison. The five other convicted Hondurans had previously received their sentences for their hostage-taking convictions.

Eduardo Guardado-Mezen, 26, was sentenced to life in prison March 9. Co-defendants Jose Marlon Ibarra-Zelaya, 26, Jose Efrain Linares-Tabora, 27, Marvin Arturo Peralta Ramirez, 23, and Henry Gutierrez-Andrade, 26, all from Honduras, were sentenced Feb. 4 to 24 years in prison.

“Today’s final sentence and the previous sentences illustrate the gravity of these hostage-taking cases,” said Joseph R. Webber, special agent-in-charge for the ICE Houston office. Holding hostages for additional smuggling fees, and the related violence is a growing trend in human smuggling ventures. Aliens who plan on entering our country illegally should consider the extreme risks they are put themselves in when they pay a smuggler to help them cross our borders and circumvent the checkpoints. It’s not worth the danger; it’s not worth your life.”

After a two-week trial in October, a federal jury found all six defendants guilty on all 30 counts of smuggling and hostage taking. The incident occurred in March 2004 when officers with the Houston Police Department (HPD) responded to a 911 call at an apartment on the 1300 block of Greens Parkway.

HPD officers entered the apartment and discovered 15 illegal aliens inside a cramped bedroom and called ICE agents for assistance. ICE agents then arrested the six defendants, and the illegal alien hostages they were holding.

Some aliens identified Eduardo Guardado-Mezen as the person responsible for robbing \$5,000 from a rival female smuggler at gunpoint and loading the aliens into waiting vehicles to take them to another location to extort more money from family and friends.

Many aliens paid the smugglers \$1,500 in fees, but those arrangements increased after the defendants took them hostage to another location.

ICE agents seized several handguns hidden inside the tank of one of the toilets.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.